



**Rochford District  
Council**

**Councillor James Newport (Liberal Democrat Group)  
Leader, Rochford District Council  
Representing Downhall and Rawreth  
Email: [cllrjames.newport@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:cllrjames.newport@rochford.gov.uk)**

Chancellor of the Exchequer  
11 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AB

(Sent by email only to [rachel.reeves.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:rachel.reeves.mp@parliament.uk) )

27 September 2024

Dear Chancellor of the Exchequer,

**Winter Fuel Allowance Payments**

At Rochford District Council's Full Council meeting held on 17th September 2024, I along with all Members expressed our deep concern at the Government restricting eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments to those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

The Government's change in policy will result in the number of pensioners eligible for Winter Fuel Payments falling from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million across England and Wales, resulting in approximately 10 million pensioners being negatively impacted. In Rochford district alone the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 17,729. This means 92.5% of pensioners currently eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment will not receive the payment this winter or onwards.

Restricting eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credit or other qualifying means-tested benefit means a large number of pensioners on low incomes who are only just above the threshold to qualify for Pension Credit or other benefits, will narrowly miss out. This will cause undue hardship on many of our residents and further to those on lower or middle incomes who have little to no time to adjust their spending to try to offset this loss.

It should also be noted that the eligibility criteria does not take account of those pensioners who may have high energy usage due to illness or disability and to which the Winter Fuel Payment is vital.

**Rochford District Council  
Council Offices, South Street,  
Rochford, Essex. SS4 1BW.**

**Website: [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)**

It is Rochford District Council's view that Government has set the threshold at which pensioners do not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments far too low. Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for pension credits. This is significantly lower than the living wage.

The proposed change to Winter Fuel Payments will contribute to an escalation in fuel poverty in England and Wales with pensioners unable to afford to keep their homes adequately heated over the winter months. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October 2024, which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty. It means many pensioners will be taking the difficult decision to either heat their homes at the expense of other living essentials such as buying food or living in cold and damp properties and suffering the negative consequences to their health and mental wellbeing.

Rochford District Council is also concerned by the low take up of Pension Credit, with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving the benefit – and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so. As a Council we recognise the role we have to play in increasing awareness of benefits, such as Pension Credit, to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to. We have committed to raise greater awareness amongst our residents and a local campaign will commence shortly to maximise uptake of pension credits.

As Leader of Rochford District Council, I respectfully request the Government immediately pause its policy linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt and that a new threshold be identified to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments be introduced.

Finally, please note that I shall be sending a copy of this letter to our Members of Parliament asking them to give their support and the Council has also signed Age UK's Winter Fuel Petition.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Newport', written in a cursive style.

Councillor James Newport  
Leader, Rochford District Council